

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, February 23, 2002

By Dave Mears

(NOTE: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item means "for further details" and usually represents what I believe to be the most helpful news resource if a reader wants more information on a particular item.)

THE WEEK'S TOP NEWS (in chronological order):

(SUN) Railroad Development Corporation observed its 15th anniversary. The Pittsburgh, PA. based railway conglomerate, headed by Henry Posner, operates or has interest in railroads in South America, Europe and Africa, as well as the Iowa Interstate Railroad in the U.S. A photo documentary of RDC's history is available on their website. (ffd: www.rrdc.com)

(MON) The New York City Transit Authority's L Line began operation of the first of a new fleet of computer controlled subway cars. The cars utilize a new train control system managing train speed and distance between trains, which a NYCTA spokesman said was installed on the L Line because its operation is independent of other subway lines and so is best for testing purposes. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(MON) The National Association of Railroad Passengers reported that Amtrak gained U.S. passenger market share between January, 2002 and January, 2001, while U.S. airlines lost market share. For domestic air travel, ridership dropped 14.7 percent and passenger miles dropped 12.8 percent, while Amtrak ridership increased 4.5 percent and Amtrak passenger miles increased 5.0 percent. (ffd: NARP)

(TUE) Passenger car manufacturer Bombardier announced that it had received orders for 30 bi-level cars. The orders were placed by the North San Diego County Transit District, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority, all for current or future commuter rail operations. (ffd: Bombardier Corp.)

(WED) In one of the worst rail accidents ever, 361 persons were killed and scores more injured in a fire aboard an Egyptian passenger train. The accident occurred near the town of al-Ayatt, approximately 45 miles south of Cairo. Although the cause of the fire was still under investigation, authorities believed that it may have been started by a malfunctioning

portable gas stove used for cooking aboard the train. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) 16 Amtrak employees were arrested in New York, NY. The employees, who clean and maintain passenger cars at Amtrak's Sunnyside Yard in Queens, were accused of using credit and phone cards taken from the wallets and purses of passengers who had inadvertently left them aboard Amtrak trains. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(WED) Norfolk Southern instituted a "matched consist" policy requiring like locomotives to be run together to maximize overall performance. NS established six categories of locomotives that may be run together: Group Y for yard switching units, Group 1 for 4 axle units used in yard, local or road service, Group 2 for 4 axle units used in merchandise and intermodal service, Group 3 for conventional 6 axle units, Group 4 for high-adhesion 6 axle units and Group 5 for alternating current SD80MAC units. Each group includes specific locomotive models. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(THU) The National Reparations Coordinating Committee, which is considering lawsuits against companies who profited from slavery before 1865, identified 4 North American railroads - Canadian National, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific - whose predecessor companies used slave labor. A Committee spokesman said that 94 early American railroads had been identified as having leased slaves from slave owners to build rail lines. (ffd: USA Today)

(THU) Kansas City Southern filed suit in federal appeals court to block Canadian National/Illinois Central's new rail line to the ExxonMobil plant complex in East Baton Rouge, LA., construction of which was recently approved by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board. KCS, which presently has exclusive direct rail access to the complex, had earlier served extensive discovery requests on CN/IC relating to the new line, which the STB ruled were unnecessary for CN/IC to produce. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The National Industrial Transportation League voted to open its membership to include transportation carriers. A spokesman for NITL, which sharply criticized the service failures following recent railroad mergers, said, "While shippers, carriers and third parties will continue to have disagreements, it is in all our best interests to work together." (ffd: AAR)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending February 16, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.4 percent from the comparable week last year, down 1.9 percent in the East, but

up 0.8 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included non-grain farm products up 22.1 percent, lumber and wood products up 13.3 percent, motor vehicles and equipment up 12.6 percent and grain up 8.6 percent; notable traffic decreases include coke down 18.7 percent, primary forest products down 12.8 percent and metal and metal products down 8.9 percent. Also for the week ending February 16, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 4.8 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.8 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 28.6 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 14.6 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through February 16, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 2.8 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 2.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 6.7 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 1.7 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 7.6 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 5.6 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(THU) Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern announced that it had concluded an agreement to purchase the 1,500 mile I&M Rail Link Railroad. In announcing the acquisition, DM&E's president, Kevin Schieffer, commented, "In the railroad world, Chicago is Rome, and this gets us to Chicago." (ffd: Wall Street Journal)

(THU) Central Manitoba Railway announced that it had concluded an agreement with Canadian Pacific Railway to lease and operate CP's 58 mile Winnipeg Beach Subdivision Line between Winnipeg, MB. and Gimli, MB. (ffd: Cando Contracting Ltd.)

(THU) Canadian National announced that it had sold the former Wisconsin Central's 23.7 percent ownership of Australian rail freight operator Tranz Rail. A CN spokesman did not immediately identify the buyer of the ownership stake. (ffd: Toronto Globe and Mail)

(FRI) Pursuant to an earlier agreement, the Utah Transit Authority formally filed to acquire, from Union Pacific, approximately 63 miles of line in or near several Utah cities for possible future commuter rail or light rail transit operations. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(WED) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration appointed Robert Gould Associate Administrator-Public Affairs. Mr. Gould was most recently CSX's AVP-Public Affairs in Washington, DC. (ffd: USDOT)

(THU) Amtrak's Board of Directors elected Meridian, Mississippi Mayor John Robert Smith its Chairman. Following his election, Mr. Smith, who has served on the Amtrak board since 1998, announced his commitment to preserving all Amtrak train services. (ffd: wire services)

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(CORRECTIONS (2 of them!): In last week's edition, I meant to report that, for the period January 1 through February 9 and ranked with the comparable period last year, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 7.0 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 3.2 percent; thanks here to WRR Reader Ken Annett. Also, the crossing collision that resulted in the \$55.7 million initial judgment against Canadian National/Illinois Central occurred in Bloomington, Illinois, not Bloomington, Indiana; thanks here to several WRR readers.)

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Weekly Rail Recap is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Monday or Tuesday, to the rail and transit industries and those interested in them. Send an e-mail to djmservices@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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